



# Department of State

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
TO SECSTATE WASH DC IMMEDIATE 7257  
AMEMBASSY KABUL NIACT IMMEDIATE  
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
AMEMBASSY BEIJING  
USICA WASH DC IMMEDIATE  
SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

SECRET ISLAMABAD 2137

E.O. 12065: RDS-4 3/6/00 (THURMAN, D) OR-M  
TAGS: UR, AF, MOPS  
SUBJECT: (S) SOVIET OFFENSIVE IN KUNAR PROVINCE

REF: ISLAMABAD 2128

1. (S) - ENTIRE TEXT (FOLLOWING RECEIVED FROM AMCONSUL PESHAWAR)

2. FURTHER TO REPTTEL, REPORTS REACHING PESHAWAR  
FROM REFUGEES AND BEING PREPARED FOR RELEASE BY  
WESTERN MEDIA REPS INDICATE A MASSIVE SOVIET  
OFFENSIVE IN KUNAR PROVINCE ADJACENT TO PAK BORDER.  
ACCORDING TO TRAVELERS ALONG THE KABUL-TORKHAM  
ROAD, A LARGE SOVIET MILITARY CONVOY, INCLUDING  
TANKS, ARMED PERSONNEL CARRIERS, AND TRUCKS LADEN  
WITH TROOPS, TURNED NORTHWARD OFF THE MAIN ROAD  
A FEW MILES WEST OF JALALABAD ON 26 OR 27 FEB.  
AT DAWN THE MORNING OF 3 MARCH, SOVIET FORCES

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LAUNCHED A "MASSIVE" ATTACK ON ASMAR USING

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ARMOR AND HELICOPTER-TRANSPORTED TROOPS, CAPTURING THE TOWN WITHIN A FEW HOURS. ATTACK WAS REPORTEDLY SUPPORTED BY JET AIRCRAFT AND HELICOPTER GUN-SHIPS.

3. ACCORDING TO REPORTS FILTERING ACROSS THE DURAND LINE SINCE 2 MARCH, THE SOVIETS HAVE SPREAD OUT AND HAVE BEGUN SHELLING THE AREA OF DARRAH-YE-PECH AND HAVE MOVED TROOPS NORTHWARD TO BARIKONT; THE STRENGTH OF THE SOVIET MOVE IS UNKNOWN, BUT FIGHTING IS REPORTEDLY HEAVY. (AFGHAN ARMY UNITS AT BARIKONT AND NARAY HAVE BEEN SURROUNDED AND BESIEGED BY AFGHAN TRIBAL INSURGENTS FOR OVER ONE YEAR.)

4. WESTERN NEWSMEN HAVE BEEN PICKING UP STORIES FROM REFUGEES OF "COMPLETE DEVASTATION AND DESTRUCTION" OF AFGHAN VILLAGES IN THE WAKE OF THE SOVIET OFFENSIVE ACTION. ONE NEWS REPORTER TOLD ME HE HAD REPORT THAT AS MANY AS 7000-9000 FAMILIES HAVE FLED INTO PAKISTAN WITHIN THE PAST 3 OR 4 DAYS; THESE FIGURES HAVE NOT BEEN CONFIRMED FROM OTHER SOURCES, AND REPORTER WAS SKEPTICAL OF NUMBER. VARIOUS SOURCES HAVE REPORTED SOVIET USE OF EXTENSIVE FIRE-POWER, INCLUDING NAPALM AND "GAS".

5. COMMENT: INFORMATION TO DATE IS VAGUE, INCOMPLETE, AND COLORED BY EMOTIONAL STATE OF NEW ARRIVALS. CASUALTY FIGURES ARE GENERALLY BELIEVED TO BE EXAGGERATED. HOWEVER, IT IS CERTAIN AND HAS BEEN CONFIRMED FROM SEVERAL INDEPENDENT SOURCES THAT THE SOVIET OPERATION

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IS EXTENSIVE IN SCOPE AND PIERCENESS, THAT MANY INNOCENTS ARE CAUGHT IN THE CROSS-FIRE, AND THAT RESULTANT CASUALTIES ARE RUNNING HIGH.  
THURMAN

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